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TAGS: IZ PGOV PREL PREF TU

SUBJECT: MFA DISAPPOINTED WITH TURKEY ON MAKHMOUR

Classified By: PolCouns Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Mohammad Hamoud has agreed to meet in Baghdad with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) to discuss the future of the Makhmour refugee camp. Hamoud lamented that the Turkish Embassy would not participate in this meeting, and hoped that in the future the Turkish government will be more forthcoming on the issue. End summary.

MFA - Talks "Useless" Without Turkey

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¶12. (C) Embassy refugee coordinator (RefCoord) met on October 12 with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Undersecretary Mohammad Hamoud to confirm the Government of Iraq continued engagement with UNHCR to find a permanent solution to the plight of Turkish Kurd refugees in Iraq. Hamoud confirmed that he planned to attend a meeting with KRG representatives and UNHCR in Baghdad on October 17, and welcomed U.S. interest and participation in the process (Note: RefCoord will attend as an observer. End note). At the same time, he lamented that no one from the Turkish Embassy in Iraq would be present at the meeting, not even as an observer. Without Government of Turkey participation, Hamoud contended, meetings about the future of Makhmour are "useless".

¶13. (C) RefCoord agreed that all stakeholders should be involved in finding a permanent solution for the refugees, and that the proposed GOT-GOI-UNHCR Tripartite Agreement provides a vehicle to do so. The October 17 meeting, as planned by UNHCR, will examine measures to restore the civilian character of the camp (i.e., expelling PKK fighters from it). The GOI will need to lead and execute these measures. The GOT will also have to be involved in subsequent meetings to discuss the draft text of the Tripartite (Note: The Tripartite Agreement commits all parties to facilitate the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of up to 15,000 Turkish Kurd refugees from northern Iraq, including the 11,000 at the Makhmour refugee camp. End note).

Iraqi MFA Focused on Permanently Closing Makhmour

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¶14. (C) Hamoud responded that the GOI does not oppose the restoration of the camp's civilian nature, but that clearing the camp of PKK would be futile if shortly afterwards it is not shut down permanently, as the GOI would not be able to prevent the PKK from infiltrating the camp again. For Hamoud, the lack of progress in finding a permanent solution for the refugees lies on the GOT's "unwillingness to make any commitments". As an example, Hamoud mentioned that the GOI does not know how the GOT feels about the draft Tripartite Agreement, as it has provided no comments on it. RefCoord noted that the GOI had not provided any comments either. Hamoud responded that the GOI "has no problems with the current draft" but that he would check with his legal

department to see if they have any comments.

¶ 15. (C) Hamoud stated that the refugees should voluntarily return to Turkey. Those who do not want to return should be resettled in third countries. Hamoud did not think that the refugees could be locally integrated in Iraq. For the GOI, he said, Makhmour is a headache and an unwelcome factor that detracts from the GOI's goal of fostering friendly relations with Turkey. He suggested that perhaps the USG could convince the GOT to talk to the GOI about the issue.

¶ 16. (C) Comment: Dr. Hamoud has been following Makhmour for some time and is well informed about the issue. He downplayed the importance of restoring the civilian character of the camp vis-a-vis the larger issue of closing the camp entirely. While he agreed that expelling the PKK from the camp may be addressed as a separate issue from the eventual repatriation of the refugees, his inclination was to link both issues and to implicitly justify the GOI's lackadaisical approach to the PKK expulsion by the GOT's perceived refusal to address repatriation. End Comment.

KHALILZAD